

Sharon Wright

TRIES TO GRIN
AND BEAR IT



MY LITTLE boy walks out of the reception classroom, taking his coat off indignantly as usual. All the other kids are swaddled up like extras in A Christmas Carol, but mine is immune to the elements. Hates coats and those who attempt to thrust coats upon him.

Then I notice the bear.
"He's called Ben The Bear," says Junior and I think, great, that's even better than a sticker from the dinner ladies for eating up his sandwiches. This, surely, is a sign of reasonably OK behaviour being rewarded. No, it is a sign of it being his turn to take the thing home and fill in a diary about what we all do together on Ben The Bear's visit to our house.

I open the diary and look at the entries. Good grief, one of them is done as a photo story. There are captions and everything. Others are shining examples of imaginative and wholesome family life.

Right, I think, so that's watching Scooby Doo and the odd bit of fighting

dinosaurs until bedtime out, then. We must show Ben The Bear a good time. An educational, well-rounded, aren't we an interesting family everybody, good time.

Then a strange thing happens. I hear my voice go a bit funny, like a Blue Peter presenter from circa 1965.

"Right, darling," I say, over-brightly. "What shall we do with Ben? Shall we get the paints out and paint our names?"

"No."
"OK, what about making something out of Play Doh?"

"No. Can I have a biscuit?"

"No."
He goes off to the biscuit cupboard and a stand-off develops, culminating in the horrific utterance of a word that stops me in my tracks. What fresh Hell is this?

"What?" I gasp. "WHAT did you say?"

I have to do something else with my voice, which is make it go very calm and give an extremely serious lecture about how appalling That Word is and I don't care who says it at school but he must Never Ever. And so forth.

He says it again. "Right! Naughty spot!"

INEVITABLY, things go from bad to worse until I have to bring in the big guns. "Then no treat after tea and no bedtime story and..." My eyes swivel towards Ben The Bear, then back to my finger which is still in the air, mid wag. I cough. "Except that Ben The Bear is here, so we will do these things tonight for him because, er, he's a guest." I trail off.

Yes, some very effective parenting there I think. It's called Learning To Keep Up Appearances. My poor little sausage has stopped saying It and is now trying to establish the hierarchy of naughty words.

"You said Hate was the worst word, Mummy!"

Cue a hasty reassessment of all the words I've told him were very naughty. Hate and stupid, he is interested to discover, are not the worst words after all. There's also, I now decide, an amnesty on relatively innocent-sounding poo and wee puns.

Order is restored and Is There A Monster? comes on the radio so we dance around the kitchen together, doing mad disco moves and laughing like drains. It isn't synapse-boosting Mozart, but surely Tony Blair would approve of all this obesity-preventing physical activity. Though I, for one, now need a sit down. Then it's tea, books and bed.

I reach for the diary. Luckily, Ben The Bear will not actually be in charge of the pen or the content when it comes to writing up his so-called diary. I am. What a nice evening, I think, in Presenter Voice, a few edited highlights will be fine, don't you think, Ben?

We have to
show Ben
the Bear
just what a
fine family
we are

expressyourself Life choices

I go into a dream when I'm driving

Former Coronation Street actress
SURANNE JONES is 28, single
and lives in Manchester

FOOD

Always the same or always game?

When I was younger I always stuck to my dad's home cooking but now I try everything. I think that comes from getting older and visiting more countries. I ate horse once on a school trip in Germany - it wasn't very nice. These days I'd describe myself as a foodie. The only things I don't like are celery and gin.

CLOTHES

M&S or D&G?

High street for everyday wear but I'll splash out if I'm going somewhere special. I've been busy working all year so at the end of a shoot, I've bought the clothes my characters have worn. It's not ideal but it is handy. I love Topshop and I'm beginning to get the Primark bug because all my friends keep telling me to go there.

HOLIDAYS

Beach or piste?

Beach. I've just come back from India where I spent most of the time sitting on the beach because I was so tired. I've never been on a piste in my life. I'd love to but think I'd be more après ski than the real thing. My ideal holiday would be in Rome or Florence because I love architecture.

TECHNOLOGY

Gadget girl or technophobe?

Technophobe. I've only just started to learn how to use my computer. My brother is an IT expert and my mum's very good too but I'm old-fashioned. I really only need my Filofax.

HOUSEKEEPING

Aggie & Kim or Wayne & Waynetta?

I'm pretty tidy but I give myself a break at the weekend and won't make the bed until just before I get back into it. A girl has to give herself a day off.

MONEY

Rainy day or live for today?

Both. I wouldn't think twice about spending money on a big evening out with family and friends. But the acting business is so unstable that I have to save, just in case everyone suddenly turns against me and decides I can't act.

ENTERTAINING

Intimate dinner or big bash?

I may set out to have a nice, intimate dinner and a relaxing evening but I often end up at some kind of debauched party dancing on podiums. Sometimes my friends and I dress up in ball gowns and black tie hoping that looking smart will help us be sensible but even then we'll end up in a club.

CARS

Boy racer or Sunday driver?

My friends would say I'm a boy racer but I think it's more that I lack concentration when I'm driving. I go into a dream and forget what I'm doing, which is terrible. I haven't got a car at the moment but I'm looking for one. I like Audis.

CHILDREN

Mary Poppins or Cruella de Vil?

Mary Poppins. I've always wanted a big family so meeting someone, settling down and having children is my main goal, above and beyond acting. I'm godmother to two children and when I see them I give them sweets, run round and generally wind them up.

FRIENDS

Quantity or quality?

Happily, I have a lot of good friends. Some are from my school days, some are people I've worked with and some are new friends. I love people and,

although it's hard to keep in touch with my existing friends, you never know who you're going to meet who might inspire you.

HEALTH

Alternative or aspirin?

Neither, which is stupid because I can sit with a headache for hours. I try to drink water and relax but sometimes I should pop a pill and be instantly better. I went to Thailand at the beginning of last year and gave up dairy foods, alcohol and cigarettes. I felt great but I couldn't keep it up for very long.

DECOR

Minimal or cosy?

Cosy. I'm a duvet on the sofa girl. Décor wise I'm eclectic in my tastes. I like things that make me feel comfortable and warm. I collect things from places I've visited.

FASHION

Victim or setter?

Neither. I've tried to follow fashion in the past but I can't carry it off. I'm very into jumpers, jeans and classic coats. I think I'm old before my time. When I was in my early teens I always wore culottes and small heels which made me look about 30 and that kind of stuck with me.

FITNESS

Jane Fonda or Jim Royle?

I'm an extremist. If I get a gym bug, I'll be there every day doing cardiovascular stuff, swimming, weights and then the steam room. But then I'll start working and I won't do anything for months.

APPROACH TO LIFE

Mañana or right now?

I'm a Virgo so I'm a perfectionist. I get things done and have to do them well. I'm a total list freak and can't sleep at night if things aren't ticked off. I even write lists that say things like "eat a banana in the morning" and "have green tea".

● Suranne Jones is in *Strictly Confidential*, tonight on ITV1 at 9pm.

DEANY JUDD

Picture: CAMERA PRESS

